

















## HENS AND HEN-FRUIT.

Supplying Arizona with Poultry and Eggs.

A BOONING LOS ANGELES ENTERPRISE.

The Notable Growth of a New Business, and How it is Conducted—Surprising Statistics.

Probably very few Angelenos, outside of those in similar business, have any adequate idea of the proportions assumed by the egg and poultry trade in this city, nor of the manner in which the demands of that trade are met. A Times reporter's investigations in this line developed information which will be interesting and probably surprising to the majority of readers.

In the spring of unpretentious one-story business rooms with line east side of Spring street opposite the Nadeau block, is one bearing the sign, "Mathews Bros., Commission Merchants." The brothers are John R. and Lewis J. The rather small store is piled with egg-cases, sacks of potatoes and other articles usual in a commission store.

A Texas reporter the other day had a long and pleasant interview with Mr. J. R. Mathews in regard to the business, of whose proportions he had received hints.

"Step back this way, if you wish to see what we are doing," said Mr. Mathews, waiting long enough for the store to a yard in the rear. The yard, some forty feet square, was filled with hen-houses and coops of all sizes and patterns.

"Here are our accommodations for poultry of all sorts," said Mr. Mathews. "We can care for about 3000 at a time. You will notice that the ground is graded, each variety having a compartment to itself. Here, for instance, are Brown Leghorns, White Leghorns, Plymouth Rocks, Black Spanish, and so on for quantity, all in their respective coops. Here are the turkeys over, there are the ducks, and so on. The common fowls, the 'mixed breeds,' as we call them, the room next that is filled with 'broilers.' We have handled here as many as 2200 chickens of all kinds in a day."

"Where do all these fowls come from?"

"From the surrounding country towns—Orange, Santa Ana, Downey, Pomona, etc., where they are picked up by the local merchants and shipped to us in these flat cars, which contain three or four dozen."

"Is your trade in eggs as extensive in proportion?"

"Fully so. These are the two specialties of our business, though we also deal in butter, potatoes, meat, and dried fruits. Our eggs are gathered from the farmers by the wagons of the country merchants in all the outlying country, and shipped to us three times a week. San Bernardino and Newhall are important points in our egg-supplying list. Some of our customers bring in their supplies by wagon. Some who supply us do so on a regular basis. One man sent us in thirty-three cases of eggs in one day, and we have had at one time 278 cases from a single party at Westminster. Our business is doing nearly 700 cases. A case contains thirty dozen eggs, and 700 cases would be 21,000 dozen."

"Where does the bulk of your poultry and eggs find a market?"

"The bulk goes to supply the Arizona market. The only thing against us there is a heavy freight rate. Then, of course, we also supply a large demand from local dealers. We do not cater to a retail trade, though we occasionally accommodate customers in that line."

"How old is this enterprise of yours, Mr. Mathews?"

"The business was two years old the first of April."

"And how do you account for its having grown to such proportions in so short a time?"

"Well, we have been conducting our business squarely and on inflexible rules. When we started a great many said, 'Oh, you can never make a go of it by supplying yourself to this specialty.' We were convinced, however, that such an enterprise, properly conducted, would work to the advantage of the producer, the country merchant, the general supply firms of Los Angeles, and all concerned. Croakers said, 'You'll find it impossible to make a man will send his eggs to you one week, and the next he will to some other firm.' But our customers were not hard to hold, when they understood our methods. We often have a chance to buy eggs or poultry, and then could sell it out ahead of the consignments on hand, thus leaving the consignors in the lurch. But we believe that to be a bad policy as it would be bad business. So we make no exceptions to our rule of buying nothing wholesale. Our business is strictly one of commission. If a man wishes to leave his produce with us to sell, he can do so; otherwise he can take it elsewhere. Another of our rules is to have no favorites. First in, first sold, is our unvarying law. A man comes in with a load of eggs and says, 'Here, I want to go home to-night. Will you sell my eggs and let me have the money this afternoon? We simply say we won't do it. Why? I'll answer you as I answer him: 'Now we're glad to accommodate you. We can do so justly, but we can't. There are a lot of men who have sent in their eggs ahead of time. We cannot sell yours first and leave them to take their chances. You come number—' and your eggs will be sold in that order. You would like it if your eggs had been shipped in here, and I should hold them back to give precedence to some other man just because he happened to come in person. Well, the man sees the justice of that, and becomes a regular customer. If by any means follows that those who come last are left. Very often they get the highest prices for their eggs. By acting thus we have secured a solid list of patrons, some of whom do a heavy business. The coming firm of poultry-growers, by the way, is that of Whitney, who has just moved to La Ciénega chicken ranch bids fair to be a big and important concern."

"You spoke, Mr. Mathews, of the benefit resulting to the general supply firms from your business."

"Yes, they are benefited, and in this way. Establishments like ours are classifying business. In time, all distinct branches of business will be in the hands of distinct firms—just as the distinct branches of water making are divided so that one man makes all the balance wheels and nothing else, or another all the dials and nothing else. Now formerly a firm like that of Mr. Germain had to handle eggs, and not being exclusively devoted to eggs, could not fill orders as conveniently or as satisfactorily as an egg firm could. Suppose an order came for eggs and a Plymouth Rock hen. They would have to scour around the country for some name to fill the order, and the chances are that if he didn't have but 18 hens he would fill out with roosters, thinking it made no difference. Now, when there are firms having an order for eggs or poultry, they simply send it to us to fill. We fill it without difficulty, and they have the goods sent down on their side, getting exactly what they want, and without trouble. So, when we receive orders from them, we send it to them to fill. You see such methods simplify business, and are more satisfactory all around. 'You probably have some queer customers?'"

"Yes, The Chinese, for instance. They are great hands for poultry and ducks, and are among our best customers. They have a good deal of both, no doubt, about Chalmers eating, and wouldn't expect them to be over-fastidious; but there are some who are picky, and will take nothing but the very best, except in butter, which they don't seem to know much about. They are square customers, and grow queer if treated squarely, and sure pay."

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 1885.

Board met pursuant to adjournment. On motion of Supervisor Lindley the following communication was ordered sent to Mr. General T. S. Grant:

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C. H. DUNSMON, Clerk.

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